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1 March 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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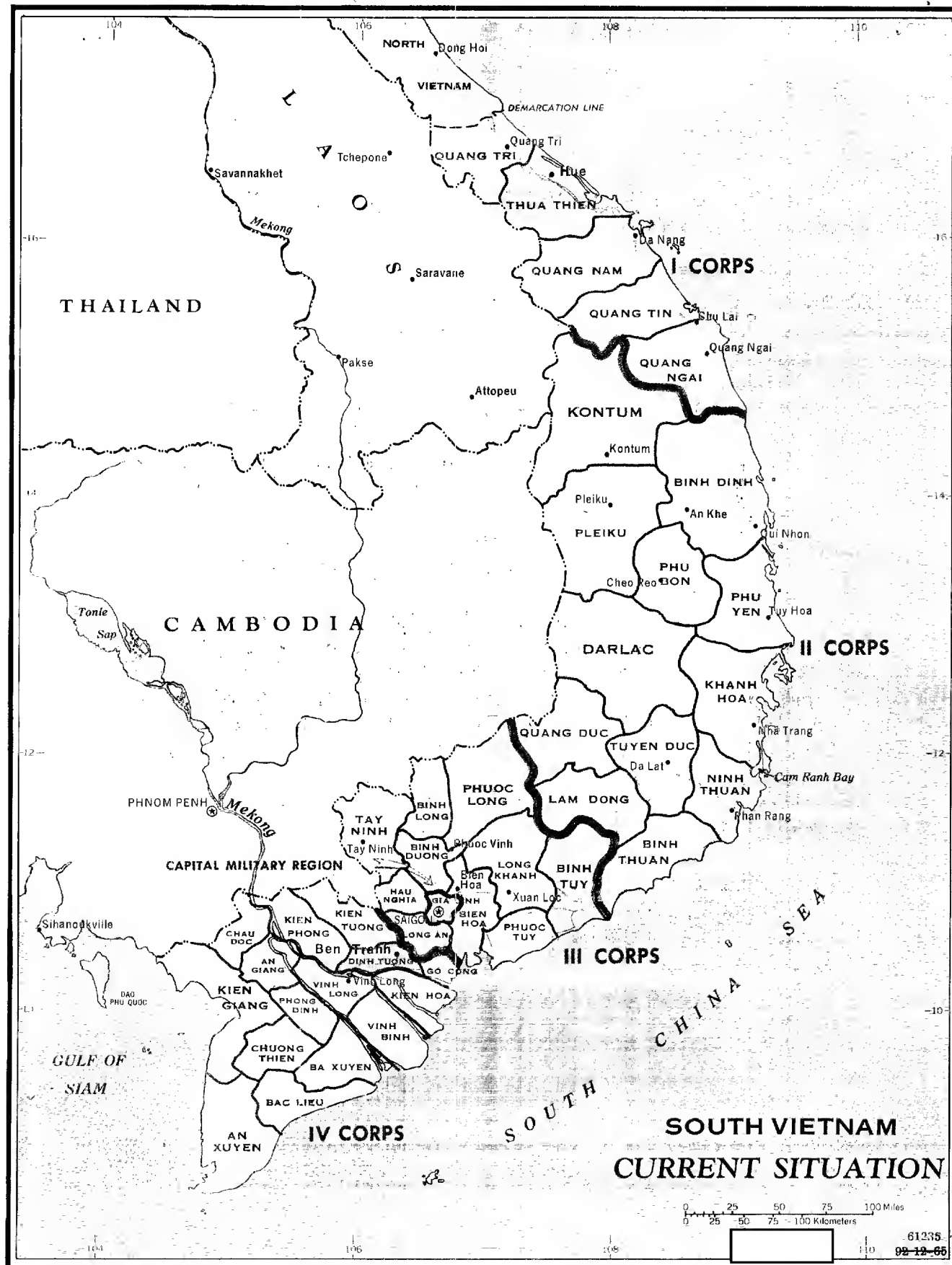
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Three US Marine companies reinforcing South Vietnamese troops yesterday in Thua Thien Province encountered strong opposition from an estimated main force battalion of Viet Cong about 15 miles southeast of the provincial capital of Hue. According to official reports, US casualties in this engagement were 15 killed and 26 wounded as against Viet Cong losses of 48 killed and six captured.

Prior to yesterday's action, South Vietnamese troops operating in this area since 24 February had reported killing 143 Viet Cong while sustaining casualties of 16 killed and 43 wounded.

In the delta province of Dinh Tuong yesterday, Viet Cong forces directed mortar fire on the district town of Ben Tranh and simultaneously attacked three nearby paramilitary outposts. One of the outposts was apparently overrun. Initial reports listed government casualties of 12 killed, 17 wounded (1 US), 23 missing, and 50 weapons lost. At least six Viet Cong were killed during one of the attacks. A South Vietnamese relief force is now in the area, and no further contact has been reported.

During the night of 27-28 February, a reinforced battalion of Viet Cong attacked a paramilitary outpost and a government battalion guarding a refugee resettlement area in Binh Tuy Province. Air and artillery strikes helped to repel the enemy assault, and no further contact has been reported since the arrival of four battalions of relief troops yesterday morning. Government casualties were 34 killed (2 US), 64 wounded (2 US), and 17 missing. Viet Cong losses are unknown.

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*Dominican Republic: Former president Bosch has bitterly criticized President Garcia Godoy for his agreement with the military and has made an implied threat that he will boycott the 1 June elections.

In a radio speech yesterday, the former president avoided calling for a renewal of the general strike to obtain military obedience to the government but ominously told his audience to remain "ready" so it "may be heard well."

Bosch criticized Garcia Godoy for not implementing his 6 January decree calling for the overseas assignment of the service chiefs. Bosch said that Garcia Godoy has "ignored his own words" in not gaining compliance with the decree and that instead of leading the nation "he bobbed like a cork." He added that "the President has placed the destiny of the republic in mortal danger by turning his back on his own words."

Bosch charged that Garcia Godoy's refusal to compel complete military obedience has created a precedent for military disrespect for any elected government. This, Bosch claimed, makes the 1 June election "useless." Bosch also restated his theme that "conditions have not been created" for holding elections.

Despite similar protestations made privately earlier by Bosch, the Embassy as recently as 27 February expressed the view that the former president will run for office if he can be fairly certain of victory and believes he will be able to assume office. Any firm decision by Bosch on his candidacy might well be postponed until after his party has its convention.

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The next move appears to be up to Garcia Godoy. He earlier said he wanted to avoid a public justification of the compromise "solution" to the civil-military impasse until he heard the extent and source of hostile reaction. It is not clear how strongly committed the President will be to this "solution" in the face of Bosch's criticism. [REDACTED]

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[* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State or of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.]

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Brazil: [President Castello Branco appears to be nearing agreement to back War Minister Costa e Silva as the government's presidential candidate.]

[At a meeting between the two leaders last week, Costa e Silva apparently received the impression that the President will support him if he can win the nomination of the progovernment National Renewal Alliance. [redacted] the war minister now will make every effort to obtain the alliance's endorsement. He had earlier indicated that he might be willing to run on an opposition ticket.]

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[Castello Branco has been withholding commitment to any candidate and has encouraged other potential contenders to enter the race. A final endorsement of Costa e Silva is probably contingent on satisfactory assurances that the war minister will continue the present government's policies. Costa e Silva seems prepared to cooperate. He is said, for example, to have made it clear that he is not seeking support from the politically influential Carlos Lacerda because of Lacerda's opposition to the regime.]

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NOTES

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USSR: The two Soviet Venus probes launched in November 1965--Venus 2 and Venus 3--should pass close to the planet within the next several days. According to unofficial Soviet statements, the probes carry different payloads, and are equipped to measure temperature, cloud cover, radiation, atmospheric composition, and other physical features of Venus as well as conditions on the way. Another possible experiment may be to photograph Venus and transmit the pictures back to earth. Periodic Soviet press announcements have suggested that both probes are still operating.

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